

*Wedding Policies
and
Guidelines*



*First Presbyterian Church
Aiken, SC*

A LETTER TO THE BRIDE AND GROOM

Congratulations on your upcoming marriage. There is no doubt, that a blest marriage of two mature and committed people is truly a gift from God. Thus the main concern that we have for you is that you have a blest marriage, a marriage that will be spiritually and personally fulfilling, one that will be able to stand the test of time and circumstances. The desire of all of us at First Presbyterian is to celebrate this God-given gift in a service of worship that is appropriate for this life-shaping step of commitment. This booklet that we have prepared has this clearly in mind. It reflects both the Christian meaning of the occasion and the experience that we have had in working with many couples with the important dynamics of the marriage event.

The Ministers

A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

From the Book of Order, W-4.9001

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage involves a unique commitment between two people, traditionally a man and a woman, to love and support each other for the rest of their lives. The sacrificial love that unites the couple sustains them as faithful and responsible members of the church and the wider community.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THOSE PLANNING A WEDDING

Dear Friends:

First Presbyterian Church is pleased to offer its facilities and staff to couples who wish to make their marriage Christian in word and in deed. To that end, we encourage members and friends to use the facilities of the church when a wedding is being planned.

Our church has a Wedding Guild made up of trained and experienced volunteers. After you have scheduled the minister and church facilities for your wedding, a Wedding Guild coordinator will be assigned to work with and assist you in planning your wedding.

Your wedding should be one of the highest and most cherished moments in your life. For that reason, we hope that its planning and conduct will always be a beautiful and meaningful experience that will, for all time, enrich your life together.

The most important thing to remember is that a Service of Christian Marriage is essentially a worship experience in which sacred vows are exchanged by two people who are making a life-time commitment to each other. It is both a joyous and a serious occasion and has both social and civil implications. Because a wedding in the Church is an act of worship, the rules governing the conduct of worship always take precedence over varied social considerations.

We are looking forward to working with you in making plans for your wedding. This booklet of suggestions and church policies has been developed to assist you in your preparation, and we hope you will find it helpful.

The Wedding Guild
(06/14)

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THE DATE

When a bride or her representative wishes to initiate wedding plans, she should proceed as follows:

1. Establish with the minister and church administrator a mutually acceptable time and date for the wedding and rehearsal so that it can be recorded on their respective church calendars. This should be done as early as possible before the wedding. If you plan to have a rehearsal, ask that the date and time for the rehearsal be reserved also.
2. To confirm your reservation of the church facilities, complete the wedding form (marking the facilities desired), return it to the church office together with your payment of the appropriate fees. (See fee schedule page 14) Please note that fees will be returned if notice of wedding cancellation is given 72 hours prior to scheduled date.
3. The date should be cleared and confirmed with the church office before making a public announcement or ordering your wedding invitations.
4. Reserve a time for the bride and groom to counsel with the minister.
5. Schedule a meeting with the wedding director to discuss flowers, decorations, music, photography and other items of concern.
6. Schedule a meeting with the church organist to plan music.
7. It may be possible to have more than one wedding on the same day at First Presbyterian provided both parties are agreeable. However, the first request will be given first priority. At least three hours must lapse between the two ceremonies; a four-hour lapse is minimal if a reception at the church follows the first service.

THE CIVIL PREPARATIONS:

1. A marriage license must be secured from a Probate Court in South Carolina. The wedding need not be held in the same county in which the license is obtained.
2. No blood test is required by the State of South Carolina.
3. A twenty-four (24) hour waiting period is required before you can secure a license. Application for the license must be made by both the bride and groom at the office of the Probate Judge, located at 109 Park Avenue, Aiken (803-642-2009). The license may be picked up by either the bride or the groom during regular office hours, 8:30 a.m. - 4:45 p.m., Monday through Friday. The office is closed on Saturday and Sunday. The fee is \$45.00 in cash only (the correct amount is requested). You must have a valid driver's license, social security card, military ID (if applicable), or legal documents that list name and birth date.
4. Persons eighteen (18) years of age and over may secure a marriage license without parental consent. Persons between 18 and 25 must show proof of age and those under 18 years must have birth certificate and signatures of both parents. Sixteen is the minimum age to secure a license. Any minor under age 18 should telephone (803-642-2009) for instructions before going to apply for a license.
5. Please remember to bring your marriage license with you to the rehearsal and leave it with the minister or wedding director. If no rehearsal is scheduled, please bring the license to the minister the day before the wedding.

THE MINISTER

1. The ministers of First Presbyterian Church count it a privilege to officiate at weddings. Please arrange date and time with minister personally. It is also a pastoral responsibility for the minister to counsel those to be married. An appointment should be made with the minister for counseling as plans for your wedding are being made. Dates and times are best arranged directly with the minister. The number and length of sessions may vary and will be determined by the minister and the couple. The first session should be at least one month prior to the wedding.
2. The minister will be happy to work with any couple who wishes to personalize their wedding. This, however, usually requires considerable time investment on the part of the couple working with the minister. A couple might consider selecting special scripture passages, writing a special prayer or including some appropriate poetry to add a personal touch.
3. The minister is responsible for the conduct of the wedding and will give appropriate instructions to guide you throughout the ceremony.
4. Should you desire to have another minister officiate or assist, that desire should be made known to the church minister who will then be responsible for extending an invitation to the visiting minister.
5. The minister of First Presbyterian or the wedding director is responsible for interpreting the policy of the church and conducting the rehearsal for the wedding.

THE WEDDING GUILD

The Wedding Guild director is responsible for arranging and directing the wedding participants. There is no fee for this service.

The bride may choose to use a wedding consultant of her personal choice. It is the church policy to have a Wedding Guild director present at all weddings in the sanctuary to assure that the beliefs, policies and traditions of the church are properly observed.

If used, an outside wedding consultant must meet with the church Wedding Guild director at least one month prior to the wedding.

THE REHEARSAL

The rehearsal time is usually scheduled for one hour, and we encourage those involved to arrive on time for this appointment.

THE MUSIC FOR THE WEDDING

1. As the marriage service is a service of worship, the music that is selected for the wedding should embody the same qualities of worship that are found in other worship services. Wedding music should focus on God and emphasize the faith of the Christian community. Music that emphasizes romantic love or sentimentality is more appropriately used at the reception. Our church organist can help you select music that should meet the requirements of your wedding service.

2. The church organist is expected to play for all weddings. Exceptions can be made only after consultation with the organist. The fee schedule for this service is found on page 14. Should you desire that someone other than the church organist play for your wedding, this desire should be made known at an early date and cleared with the organist.

3. If you have further questions, please feel free to call our church organist at 648-2662. We are eager to guide and assist you in making your wedding a beautiful and memorable occasion.

GUIDELINES FOR MILITARY PROTOCOL DURING WEDDING CEREMONY

Because the church is considered a sanctuary, swords should not be bared in church, so the sword arch is formed immediately following the ceremony on the steps or on the walk leading from the steps of the church. It is never formed at the reception or anywhere except just outside the church.

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

1. The officially authorized and approved services of The First Presbyterian Church are normally used at weddings in the Church.
2. You might consider a printed order of service for your wedding. This is a fitting memento and suitable folders may be ordered from most Church Supply Houses or through a local printer. The cost of the paper and printing would be your responsibility but can usually be done at a minimal cost.
3. Music should begin and candles should be lit about 30 minutes before the ceremony begins. The processional should begin at the time appointed for the ceremony. If a guest book is being used, it will be closed 10 minutes before processional.
4. The congregation should stand for the entrance of the bride and her escort. The Wedding Guild director will be happy to discuss options for the entrance of the wedding party.
5. It is not mandatory that the guests be seated on the traditional left and right sides as friends of the bride or groom. If one family is from out of town, it is well to have guests seated evenly on both sides of the church.

THE WEDDING PARTY

You will want to carefully choose the members of your wedding party. Relatives and friends will, of course, be your first choice. Be sure to give them the exact time of the rehearsal and the wedding when you ask them to be in your wedding. You will want to give them careful directions to the church, especially if they live out of town.

2. Experience has shown that the use of children in the bridal party requires careful thought and planning. If you are considering the use of very young flower girls or ring bearers, you might want to plan for them to be seated with their parents or a family member near the front of the church after the processional rather than standing with the wedding party throughout the entire ceremony.

3. Encourage all of your attendants and ushers to be on time for the wedding rehearsal as it is a time for planning and practice to insure a beautiful wedding. Usually one hour is allotted for this.

4. For most weddings in the sanctuary, members of the wedding party should be at the church at least two (2) hours before the time of the wedding; the wedding party and ushers should be dressed and ready for photographs one hour before the ceremony. The photographer should be scheduled for this time. The groomsmen/ushers should be in the narthex ready to begin seating guests 30 minutes before the ceremony.

5. Please arrange for groomsmen/ushers to light the candles so you will have the information ready when you meet with the Wedding Guild director. (Usually 2 are selected.)

6. The parlor is available for the bride and her attendants to dress. For your convenience in dressing, a full length mirror has been attached to the parlor wall, located behind the door to the hall. Please leave the room in good order after the wedding.

7. Personal property should be removed from the parlor promptly after the wedding. The church cannot be responsible for property left in the building during the wedding, reception, or following the wedding/reception. However, the parlor will be locked during the wedding service. No personal property may be left in the church buildings overnight either before or after the wedding.
8. A room is available for the groom and ushers if needed. Please advise us of this need when making the wedding reservations with the church office.
9. If early access to the church building is necessary, arrangements should be made with the Wedding Guild director a week prior to the wedding.
10. Kindly refrain from smoking within the church buildings at all times.

THE DECORATIONS

The Wedding Guild director will be available to advise or assist you in planning decorations for the sanctuary. To prevent damage to the building or furniture, the following rules must be adhered to:

1. Nails, screws, staples, or tape may not be used on the floor, carpet, walls, or furniture.
2. The florist can supply appropriate ribbon or floral markers for designating pews for use by family and honored guests.
3. Symbols of worship in a Presbyterian worship service are the pulpit, baptismal font, and communion table. Each of these represent the Proclamation of God's Word through scripture and sacraments. Ordinarily, the expectation is that these symbols will remain in place in a wedding service. Upon consultation with the Wedding Guild director and at the discretion of the pastor, some movement of communion table and baptismal font may be allowed.

4. Flowers, greenery, or candles appropriate for a worship service may be placed on the pulpit. There are also two small tables and four pedestals available for flowers and/or candelabra. The church has two brass candelabra and two single brass candle sticks which may be used. There are oil filled candles for both candelabra and candle sticks. If additional candles are used they must be non-drip (your florist can supply). Should drips occur, the florist is responsible for removing them from floor or furnishings. Extinguish all candles immediately after the photo session. A kneeling bench is provided for those couples who wish to use it.

5. Church decorations during Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas and Easter must remain as placed in the sanctuary. Any additional flowers used for a wedding at these times should be coordinated with them.

6. Silk flower petals instead of “live” petals should be used by the flower girl. Live flower petals tend to stain the carpet.

7. The florist may use the church flower containers but they may not be removed from the church buildings. It is the responsibility of the florist to make early arrangements for entering the church to decorate and for delivery of flowers prior to the wedding if other than normal hours.

8. All decorations must be removed from the building immediately following the wedding unless other arrangements have been made.

9. If you wish, wedding flowers may be left to be used in the regular Sunday worship services to honor the bride and groom or to honor or memorialize a loved one or friend. A note to that effect will be printed in the bulletin. This desire should be expressed when the wedding is scheduled with the church office. If flowers are already scheduled for that Sunday, the wedding flowers will be placed in the narthex.

THE RECEPTION

1. If you plan a wedding reception at the church, reservations for the facilities should be made at the time the wedding is scheduled. (This should include the use of the kitchen.)
2. The wedding party is responsible for securing caterers. The church kitchen and equipment may be used but it must be clearly understood that the kitchen is to be left clean and in good order. A fee will be charged for any broken or damaged supplies, equipment or any misuse of church property.
3. No nails, tacks or wire may be used on walls, tables, furnishings, etc., in Fellowship Hall or the Family Life Center. Decorations must be in suitable containers; non-drip candles must be used to protect furnishings and floors.
4. Throwing of rice, bird seed or confetti of any kind is strictly prohibited inside the church buildings. It is also requested that only bird seed be used outside the church.
5. **NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ARE TO BE SERVED ON CHURCH PREMISES.**

THE PHOTOGRAPHS

1. The wedding is a sacred service and pictures are a treasured possession. The minister will be glad to cooperate so that beautiful pictures may be made, but photographers must not interfere with or intrude upon the worship experience of the congregation.
2. Flash pictures may NOT be taken during the ceremony by the photographer or guests. Please make guests aware of this policy.
3. No pictures which require additional lighting of any kind may be taken during the ceremony, and no photographic equipment which makes noise may be used during the ceremony. Movies, video, sound recording, or other pictures may be made from the balcony or other approved location during the ceremony if they require no additional light and make no sound.
4. The photographer may take flash pictures of the bride and her escort as they enter and leave the sanctuary in the processional and recessional provided the photographer comes no further than the entrance of the sanctuary. The photographer must not delay the processional for photographs.
5. Pictures of any kind, with any kind of equipment, may be made before the wedding begins or following the ceremony.
6. It is respectfully requested that pictures with the minister be taken first and that the photographer excuse the minister before proceeding to take other photos of the wedding party.
7. It is recommended that the photographer be at the church one (1) hour prior to the service and should conclude photos no later than thirty (30) minutes following the service to allow the bridal party to participate in their reception. The wedding party should be specific as to what pictures the photographer should make. (A prepared list is very helpful.)
8. The photographer should be given a copy of this policy statement before the wedding and consult with the Minister or the Wedding Guild director before the ceremony to clarify any questions.

WEDDING FEES

Fees will be paid at the church office when the wedding is scheduled. If notice of wedding cancellations is given 72 hours prior to scheduled date, the fees will be refunded.

Nurseries will be staffed by First Presbyterian nursery employees. If child care is required, please contact the church office for arrangements. Additional fees are required.

Organist fees are to be paid two weeks prior to the wedding and are payable directly to the church office.

There is no fee for the officiating minister, however it is customary for the groom to give an honorarium to the minister as a token of appreciation.

WEDDING FEES

	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER
Wedding Sanctuary/Parlor/Men's Dressing	\$150.00	\$500.00

Organist fees:

Consultation with bridal party, wedding rehearsal and wedding service	\$200.00	\$300.00
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Additional rehearsals with soloist/ Instrumentalists (each)	\$50.00	\$50.00
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Charge for contracting singers/ Instrumentalists (each)	\$20.00	\$20.00
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(Separate fees for these individuals is the responsibility of the bridal party)